VOL. I.—No. 23. MANCHESTER, Saturday, December 26, 1868. Price One Penny.

"He roar'd, he beat his breast, he tore his hair."
DRYDEN.

Moderns have no such most outrageous motions,
They put away the hat they cannot wear;
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AN ASSAULT AT ARMS AT THE ATHENÆUM.

WHATEVER be the qualifications of the Athenæum Gymnasium, it is unquestionably a useful room; and whether it be the scene of a dramatic performance, of a concert, or of a gymnastic entertainment, it is always a popular place of resort. On the Friday evening of last week the walls seemed to have put on a special coat of whitewash in honour of the occasion of its legitimate and orthodox use. The appearance of the platform was in a high degree professional. Ropes, swings, and foils of mysterious look, a very large horse of the style called by young people "dobby," and finally one or two mattresses gave to it an aspect slightly formidable, and imparted just the faintest possible hint of risk and danger. A remarkable feature in every entertainment which is given in the gymnasium, is the attraction which it seems to offer to ladies, and especially to young ladies. It is, of course, no matter of wonder in some cases. When Mr. Cavanah, for instance, plays Dr. Ollapod, or when merry-looking gentlemen sing exquisite love ditties, the attraction is evident and comprehensible enough. But we confess in our ignorance to some slight feeling of doubt as to whether an assault at arms would be considered precisely the place for young ladies. Curious recollections of the literal derivative meaning of the word gymnasium floated across the mind, but on going into the room we were happy to be reassured on the point. The presence of many ladies convinced us that gymnastic exercises were not carried on in every respect as they were known to the Greeks. The ladies appeared to have as escorts a body of critical young men. These were very severe on the athletes. If each could not himself do something far surpassing what was attempted on the platform, he knew somebody who could; and nothing was done which in any way or to any extent excited their admiration or respect. But perhaps the most wonderful thing about the Athenæum entertainment is the band; if that be a sufficiently dignified appellation for the body of instrumentalists (comprising two violinists, a pianist, and a gentleman with some description of brass instrument) who fill up with their music any pauses which may occur. The extraordinary point about their performance was the effective and affecting way in which they accompanied the entertainment. Nothing more melodramatic can be conceived than the feeling manner in which they discerned the telling parts of the gymnastics, and made the audience tremble and shake with their slow music.

It is not the purpose, nor can it come in the scope of a short paper like this, to denote much space to the Athenæum Gymnastic Club, nor to treat the readers of the *Sphinx* to a critical examination of its present position and future prospects. But the members boast with justifiable pride, that the club is one of the oldest, if not the very oldest gymnastic club in the kingdom; claim for it the title of Father of all English societies of the sort, and glory in ascribing to its exertions the development of many exercises which are now recognised as part of the regular programme of gymnasts. Nor will we attempt to discuss the question whether gymnastics, so far as they are understood to mean the training of one part of the body, the development of one set of muscles to excess, and the neglect of all others, is beneficial or otherwise. Our concern is with the evening's amusement alone.

On Mr. Goodier, a good-natured and obliging director, taking the chair—a very hard one, to all appearance—he made a short speech, in a voice so mild as to make one think he only cared to let the musicians hear. His chief argument, so far as we understood it, was, that the fact that such large audiences were always attracted by the performances, was a sufficient proof of their great value and utility. And though we could not help thinking that if the logic were sound, the Christy Minstrels and comic singers who come to the Free Trade Hall must be well satisfied of the educational value of their performances, everybody was far too good-natured to be very critical or inconveniently logical. The performances proper began with "free exercises in musical time," chiefly remarkable for the opportunity offered to the band for distinguishing itself, and for the wonderful enthusiasm of the club instructor. In this, in the fencing drill, and in the cavalry sword exercises, which were all conducted by Sergeant Inglis, the same eager interest was observable, and made it impossible to doubt that they were labours of love to the sergeant. The programme included all the usual gymnastic feats. Though there was no competition or reward of excellence, nothing could be more enjoyable than the hearty way in which every contest was entered into. The principle which actuated the performers suggested that of juveniles, whose leader performs some out-of-the-way or difficult feat, euphoniously called a "craddy," which every other boy was bound to attempt. This sense of heartiness communicated itself to the spectators, who, in event of any particular close contest, took sides, and cheered or sighed, according to the success or failure of their champion. It would, probably, not be interesting to go through every item of the programme. In the parallel-bar performance we were most struck by the appearance of a gentleman with a gigantic biceps. If we are not mistaken, Mr. B. Heap is proud of that biceps. Indeed, a prize-fighter might view it with satisfaction and approval; and Charley Spriggs would, assuredly, have become hysterical over it. In high leaping, Mr. Hilkirk lead, apparently with great ease, in the stand-jump, and was followed by Mr. Doig; but in the running-leap the order was reversed, Mr. Hilkirk giving way very early. The style of jumping seemed to us one-sided and shuffling, and the results attained were altogether unsatisfactory and common-place. The burst of laughter, as the unsuccessful competitors knocked down the stick, and endeavoured to put it up again, and replace it so as to convince the spectators either that it had never been knocked down at all, or only by the merest bad luck, must have been trying and hard to bear. Much to the public horror and private delight of the young ladies, boxing was twice introduced. On the first occasion Messrs. Doig and Moores attacked each other with great science and vigour, which must have given each gentleman very much ado to keep his temper moderately under control. Though Mr. Doig's hair seemed at first a little in the way, and was a good deal knocked over his eyes, he appeared to get much the better of the finish. Then we saw exercises with dumb bells, on the trapeze, and horse exercise, which did not refer to riding on horseback. No part of the evening's doings was more successful than the fencing. Then followed exercises on rings, and a very slow, uninteresting, and unskilful combat between sabre and bayonet, in which the impression given was that the gentleman with the bayonet was too heavily armed. Then came exercises with Indian clubs, pieces of wood of the shape of bloated wine bottles. This part of the evening was much enjoyed by the two gentlemen who were using the light clubs. One on each side of the platform they began the proceedings, and, regardless of the fact that nobody was looking at them or paying the smallest heed to them, they persevered, and to everybody's astonishment were found to be as busy and cool as ever when every other performer had had his turn. More boxing followed, of a rougher and less scientific character, vaulting, and finally exercises on the horizontal bar, in which Mr. Henry advanced with

diffidence and shyness to perform most extraordinary feats. Though we were surprised on inquiry after the performance to hear that each gymnast was dreadfully out of form, the performance was on the whole satisfactory and enjoyable. Not the less was this the case because the element of sensationalism was carefully excluded, and the chances of a broken neck seemed anything but large. Security was never sacrificed to effect. Only one exception was there to this. A good-looking gen leman seemed to labour under the extraordinary delusion that he was gifted with great powers of balancing. Following out this impression he attempted one or two feats on the trapeze and bar. Anything poorer in its way could not be imagined. The discomfort of the performer was so evident, and he was so palpably afraid of falling and hurting himself, that the audience shared his discomfort and fear. Before the next performance we hope that the polite and business-like secretary, or some other person in authority, may solemnly warn Mr. Hornley, and so prevent the repetition of feats for which he is not at all competent, and which are, under the circumstances, alike uninteresting and rash.

THE REV. DR. PARKER.

IT is a mistake to suppose that popularity in literature, politics, or preaching is always a safe guarantee of true excellence. The contrary is often the case, for there is something in the very nature of popularity which renders the possession of it open to the suspicion of shallowness. In literature this is especially true. The profoundest thinkers have the smallest circles of admirers. The *Proverbial Philosophy* is far more widely read than *In Memoriam*. It is no answer to the argument to say that Shakespere and Milton are popular. They are more talked about than read, because it is the fashion of the time to admire them; but they are far from being popular, in a true and deep sense. There is a fashion, too, in preaching, as in other matters. Poor Edward Irving was unpopular and disappointed, until Chalmers heard him preach, and brought him into notice, and then fashionable London crowded round his pulpit, to leave him again, when the fashion changed, to disappointment and death. Charlatanism is often as successful in the race for popularity as true merit. There are preachers who flash, like meteors, across the firmament of religious society, "going up like a rocket, but coming down like the stick." These are generally to be found associated with the whirlwind and the fire of revivalism, the still small voice of true worth being left to do the real work of Christianity, without the assistance of gaping crowds. But popularity, though altogether relative, is a faithful witness, in one respect, namely—that he whom any section of the people declares great, will be found to possess more or less of that mysterious force which at once attracts and lifts the possessor above the multitude.

> It takes a high-souled man
> To move the masses even to a cleaner stye;
> It takes the ideal to blow an inch
> Inside the dust of the actual.

In religion, as in other things, the man who has an earnest belief in himself and his mission will gain followers, whether the message he has to deliver be true or false.

We have made these preliminary observations because the subject of our sketch has the reputation of being a popular and fashionable preacher. Cavendish Chapel, the scene of the labours of the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D., is a very handsome and spacious Gothic building, surmounted by a graceful spire. In the days of his predecessor it was known as Cavendish *Street* Chapel, taking its name from the street in which it is placed; but on the advent of the Rev. Joseph Parker its designation was changed, for, said that reverend gentleman, "street is of the earth, earthy; it is associated with mud and dust, and other like things; but Cavendish is Royal—therefore let us call it Cavendish Chapel." His congregation gave a silent consent, and by that name it has since been known. At this chapel may be seen the highest point of development in its form of worship to which Congregationalism has yet attained. The architecture of the place is noble, and the surroundings are in perfect harmony. The minister stands before his congregation in all the dignity of gown and bands, and his voice rolls through Gothic arches. The service is, in its way, a modified sort of ritual, in which chants and anthems have their place. Poor Dr. Watts, with his feeble hymns, is getting shelved in these days of advanced taste, or is only recognised by selections from his works. Here he is replaced by a compilation which is called the Cavendish Hymnal. The congregation is large and, to all appearances, fashionable and intelligent, though, to some extent, one that ebbs and shifts each week. It contains many of the *élite* of the Congregational body in this neighbourhood.

The Rev. Dr. Parker is in many respects a very remarkable man. His ministry in this place dates back some ten or a dozen years, during which time he has continued to draw crowded congregations. He possesses many qualifications which go to make an attractive preacher. He has a fine, commanding presence, and his attitude and bearing are suggestive of great strength. His head is massive, the lines of the face indicating considerable power and firmness of will. In addition to these advantages, he possesses a powerful and sonorous voice, and is a perfect master of elocution. His sermons are delivered with great dramatic effect, the art of putting things having evidently been studied to considerable purpose. In his most enthusiastic moments, there is always a studied effect, and perfect self command. His mind, as we find it reflected in his sermons, is as vigorous as his body. He has a strong imagination, a temperament highly poetical, allied to a keen, logical perception. But he can scarcely be called a profound thinker. There is more brilliancy and show than depth in his preaching. As some one has said, the popular preacher shows us a truth which we can see without changing our present intellectual position. He has a way of stating commonplaces that startles his hearers into the belief that they are new truths. He indulges largely in paradoxes and is eminently dogmatic. In his choice of language he is apt to heap metaphor on metaphor, and simile on simile, and is pedantic to the extent of going out of his way to choose obscure words and forms of expression. He is decidedly of the spasmodic school, and evinces this in his poetical taste. We have heard him strongly eulogise and quote largely from the leader of that school in poetry, the late Alexander Smith. There is a grim humour in his constitution, as for instance when he describes a dreamy, speculative do-nothing, as one who is going about knocking at doors which God has marked "*private*." His prayers are as dramatically delivered as his sermons, and often display considerable bad taste, and here we would submit with all respect that it is scarcely decorous or desirable in prayer to propound theological problems. To judge from most prayers we hear in dissenting chapels, we seem to have forgotten that in fervent simplicity alone consists their true beauty.

The Rev. Dr. Parker has evidently an unlimited belief in himself, and this, we take it, is one great cause of his success. Emerson says the vast majority of men are imbecile, and this gives force to the strong—that the multitude have no habit of self reliance or original action. It is said of the late Dr. Raffles that he maintained his position in his church and among the Congregationalists by the exercise of a despotic power which overawed deacons and church members. The multitude always believe in a man who believes in himself. Endowed with this faculty, Dr. Parker is enabled to indulge in the most biting sarcasm at the expense of his congregation, which seems rather to amuse than displease them. Sometimes, however, he goes a little too far for them with his self will, as when, like a right-minded man, he determined to go

to the theatre, and went there to see what sort of place it was before deciding on the good or evil of it. This hazardous slip lost him some of the more gravely puritanical in his church. Then again, not so wisely, he used his pulpit for political purposes one Sunday evening during the election, which has also given serious offence to some. Like other great and enthusiastic spirits, he is a man of unfulfilled purposes. His first great idea took the shape of a college, to be called the Cavendish College, which did see the light, but which, after "the brief and fitful fever of its life, sleeps well." Then again it is an orphanage which is to be founded, which never gets beyond an idea. Now there is to be a system of tract distribution and house-to-house visitation, which was in part achieved. Then one fine Sunday he astonishes his hearers by asking for a "Gospel Van," by means of which he may visit races, fairs, and other places where men do congregate, to preach and distribute religious literature. The appeal for the van was eloquently made, but we believe his hearers were content to take the preacher's will for the deed.

The Rev. Dr. Parker is also an aspirant for literary fame. He started a small magazine in connection with his church, with the charmingly modest title *Our Own*, but which perished through lack of knowledge, or the disposition to convey it, on the part of the congregation. He is also the author of several works, but his most important and most recent production is *Ecce Deus*. Some time ago the thoughtful reading world was surprised by the appearance of the most remarkable book of its kind which this country has produced. It was styled *Ecce Homo*, and was published anonymously. To this day, though the authorship is pretty generally known, it is not acknowledged. It is needless to mention here the curiosity and wonder which the book aroused, not only from the novelty of its views concerning the life of Christ, but for the beautiful and scholarly style in which it was written. So important was it deemed that the present premier wrote a book in review and praise of it. In his preface to the book the author stated it to be a fragment, but hinted at the possibility of it being followed by another. Naturally enough men supposed that *Ecce Deus* would be the title of this foreshadowed work. In course of time there appeared a book styled *Ecce Deus*, in appearance and arrangement very similar to *Ecce Homo*. This book, though published anonymously, has been owned by Dr. Parker. It is not a reply to *Ecce Homo*, though it contains controversial notes on that book. The writer excuses himself for producing it on the ground that the author of *Ecce Homo*, in writing of Christ, has ignored the Incarnation, and considers it, therefore, of necessity incomplete. *Ecce Deus* is therefore put forth as a sequel or completion of *Ecce Homo*. As a specimen of literary charlatanism we know of no parallel to it except the case of Tupper. Coleridge wrote an exquisite poem called *Christabel*. It was composed in two parts, at an interval of years, and after all, at the poet's death, was left a fragment. No one dared to touch or complete it except Mr. Tupper, who published a sequel and called it *Geraldine*. He tells us it was but the easy work of a few days. It is needless to say that it is a weak and in some respects an absurd production. It exists as a specimen of literary impertinence. We do not say so much of *Ecce Deus*, though, if it were admissible here, we might show that neither in conception, thought, nor in dignified beauty of style is it at all to be compared to *Ecce Homo*. Those who will take the trouble to read *Ecce Deus*, will find that, as a literary production, it is to *Ecce Homo*

As moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine.

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.—The Printers' Devil. [The author of this jocular (?) definition has been trying for some years to accomplish his object, and fancies he has succeeded. We have doubts about that, but are quite ready to give him the benefit of them.]

OUR SOCIAL SKETCH-BOOK.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S MAN.

Now, sign your names, which shall be read,
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
By village eyes as yet unborn.
The names are signed, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
The joy to every wandering breeze;
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

TENNYSON.

AN eminent divine who had arranged to read the service and preach for a brother clergyman caused great uneasiness at the parsonage, by arriving much too late. The preacher, however, was not in the least disconcerted, but quietly remarked, "It does not signify; you know they cannot begin until I arrive." Although it would be too much to say that a bridegroom cannot be married without the assistance of his best man, the nearly universal employment of that functionary renders him almost a necessity. It is a moot question whether at all public meetings and gatherings, from the attendance at church on Sundays, down to flower shows, bazaars, and cricket matches, the presence of women attracts the men, or the men the women. Possibly, they are a mutual attraction. We are pretty certain that if certain places of public worship were set apart exclusively for men, and others for women, with female preachers for the latter, and males for the former, the attendance would be very scanty. As a wedding would be shorn of its chief attraction if there were no bridesmaids, groomsmen become an absolute necessity, if for no other use than to act as a kind of setting to show off and give brilliancy to these precious jewels. But the groomsman has even more substantial uses; and there have been instances where, had it not been for his judicious firmness as "bottle-holder," the bridegroom, from sheer nervousness and stage-fright, could never have been brought up to time. The working-classes, if we are to judge by the homely couples which we see "linking" together in the public streets, lay some stress on having their friends to see them through the marriage ceremony. It is recorded of old Parson Brooks, of Manchester, that he used to marry couples at the Parish Church in a very wholesale and irregular manner, telling them, when he finished the service, to sort themselves as they went out. Now, a skilful best man would prevent such an unseemly occurrence.

Within our own experience, we have known some curious *contretemps* occur at marriages. We remember an instance of a bridegroom arriving at church on what was to have been his marriage-day, but the bride had, in the meantime, repented, and failed to appear. Afterwards a reconciliation took place, and the day was again fixed, but this time, after waiting for above a couple of hours, the bridegroom was the absentee, and actually sailed for America on the identical day. The most singular thing about the affair was that, sometime afterwards, both parties agreed to cry quits, and were married to each other after all. In Dr. Westland Marston's play, *The Patrician's Daughter*, the hero behaves like a dastardly snob, in rejecting his bride, out of revenge for a former slight. If this spouting, poetical prig's best man had behaved properly, he would have taken his principal's behaviour as a personal insult, and either given him a sound thrashing, or handed him over to the police.

A few weeks since the marriage of two persons in humble life came under our cognizance. The bridegroom and his best man arranged that they were to meet on the morning of the marriage at a certain spot near the church, and to repair thither to join the bride's party. The best man was at the rendezvous at the appointed time, and after waiting a long time "Tummus" failed to appear. Best man then went to church, where he found "Meary" and her friends in an agony of

suspense. After waiting some time longer until they were nearly in despair, as it was fast approaching twelve o'clock, "Meary" could stand it no longer, but set off in search of her future lord, and after some trouble found him, and lugged him off to church, where it immediately became apparent that he had been spending the last few hours of his bachelorhood in a slightly convivial manner. These are a few instances where the groomsman, by a stricter attention to his duties, would have prevented serious consequences.

In a previous article on the bridegroom we remarked that he was a very insignificant person in comparison with the bride, and that he even paled his ineffectual fire in presence of his best man. The young ladies have lost all interest in him, whereas they are prepared to greet his man with the warmest sympathy and welcome. The bridegroom generally chooses for his man some friend of experience in such matters, one whose presence, manners, and entertaining powers are likely to be acceptable to his bride and her attendants. The most intimate relations are at once entered into betwen the groomsmen and the bridesmaids. They have a common interest, and the services they perform for the principal parties at once establish a bond of mutual confidence. The best man may, and frequently does, with impunity, establish a flirtation with one or more of the bridesmaids. He may even go to a certain length in tender love making, without anyone thinking it at all unseemly. He is, for the time, what Lord John Russell called Mr. Joseph Hume, M.P.—a chartered libertine, The truth is that the groomsman is generally one who has passed through a good deal of this sort of thing. It is his experience which makes him invaluable. He is fast lapsing into a fogey; the bridesmaids know that he is, and are artless and unaffected accordingly; he himself knows that the bridesmaids know it, and that all his adulation, compliments, and flattery will be taken exactly for what they are worth. He has vowed repeatedly that never again will he undertake these duties, and yet somehow or other he is in as much request as ever, and is persuaded once more to undertake the office.

The duties of the best man at church need not be dwelt upon, and have indeed already been alluded to. He sees that no hitch occurs from forgetfulness on the part of the bridegroom, and that he has the certificate and wedding ring with him. The ordeal of the ring is a constant source of difficulty with nervous and awkward bridegrooms. On one occasion we saw one of these gentlemen fumble in his pockets for some time until he finally found it in one of these receptacles, wrapped up in a piece of tissue paper. His hands trembled so that he managed to drop the ring, and, tumbling down the altar steps, it went trundling down the choir. His best man was leisurely following it, when the bridegroom suddenly darted after it, and, picking it up in the most snappish manner, he hastened back to the bride's side, amid the tittering of the company, and the ill-suppressed laughter of the officiating priest. But it is after the ceremony, and chiefly at the wedding breakfast, that the best man makes himself most useful. Although he may be, like Eugene Aram, "a melancholy man," he may have a pleasant wit, and like Jaques, be possessed of "a most humourous sadness." A wedding breakfast is not necessarily a hilarious feast. There is something cheerless about it, which not even the most liberal recourse to champagne and hock can wholly dispel. The groomsman finds it hard work to keep the ball rolling. The bridegroom does not give him the slightest assistance, and regards him from a sort of pedestal of matrimonial pre-eminence. Then there is always some heavy uncle or kinsman, who will persist in preaching. Mr. Dismal is of a lugubrious nature, and in proposing the health of that worthy couple, the father and mother of the bride, he goes in for the serious business with the greatest solemnity, and never leaves off until he has them both dead and buried and gone to another and a better world. You are disposed to think with Hamlet, that the funeral baked meats do coldly furnish forth the marriage tables. That good soul, the bride's mother, breaks down as a matter of course; all the spinster aunts are dissolved in tears, and even paterfamilias has a tendency to blubber. The bride, too, begins to turn on the water works. This fidgets the bridegroom, who mutters to his man, "For heaven's sake, get us out of this slough of despond." Best man rushes gallantly to the rescue, and executes a brilliant flank movement upon old Dismal, cracks a few jokes, dashes off his neatest epigrams, eulogises the bride's mother, extols the bride's father, goes into raptures about the bridesmaids, banters the bridegroom, even lays siege to the feelings of the spinster aunts, and finally clapping a moral extinguisher upon old Dismal, he sits down, having restored the company to a certain amount of gaiety. Materfamilias has quite recovered. Paterfamilias quaffs a bumper and is getting almost jovial, and the bridesmaids are almost ready to hug their champion for dispelling the clouds and restoring the sunshine.

Some time since it was announced in the columns of a fashionable contemporary that speeches at wedding breakfasts were to be tabooed for the future. The scheme has, however, broken down, which we are glad of, for, although our connection with the Celestials of the Aristocracy is of the most slender nature, we have occasionally availed ourselves of the aforesaid columns to read some very entertaining wedding speeches. Lord Palmerston was an adept at such entertainments, and Earl Granville's geniality is always conspicuous on similar occasions. When Mr. Disraeli turns up at a marriage of one of the Rothschilds he is invariably in his happiest vein, and Mr. Bernal Osborne, who seems to become more gallant as he grows older, absolutely revels in fun and merriment. Commonplace and prosy as wedding speeches generally are, a breakfast without them is a still more dreary affair. On one occasion speeches were entirely omitted, but everything was so flat that it was felt something must be done, and a young lady kindly consented to sing. As ill-luck would have it, she struck up "The Last Rose of Summer," which completely upset everyone. The breakfast over, our groomsman is at a loose end. He feels that all his old friends are drifting away from him, leaving him high and dry, stranded on the beach. Probably he spends the rest of the day in an unsettled state at his club, indulging in billiards or some such dissipation, and returns to the house of the bride's parents to finish the evening in festivities.

> Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
> The shade of passing thought, the wealth
> Of words and wit, the double health,
> The crowning cup, the three times three,
>
> And last the dance; till I retire:
> Dumb is the tower which spake so loud,
> And high in heaven the streaming cloud,
> And on the downs a rising fire.

M.P.'S AND GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.

In consequence of the objections which have been raised against Mr. Hugh Birley and Sir Sydney Waterlow taking their seats for Manchester and Dumfriesshire, owing to their alleged holding of government contracts, attention has been drawn to the fact that a number of gentlemen have been returned to parliament who are partners in limited liability companies, many of which hold government contracts. The question has been raised whether those gentlemen who have taken their seats are eligible, and have become liable to penalties for having done so.

AN OLD FRIEND WITH A NEW FACE.

We are glad to welcome back our old friend the Cathedral Clock, which has been set agoing this week. The clock has got a bran new face, and we are happy to see that it is illuminated at night. During its absence Ben Lang's clock has been doing duty both day and night, and deserves a vote of thanks recording in its favour.

Our usual Christmas Hamper.—Christmas bills.

MINCE PIETY.

A LEADING ARTICLE FOR CHRISTMAS.

THERE are two kinds of superstition. There is the superstition which arises from the need men feel for some external object upon which to concentrate the stray and superabundant emotions within. This is the superstition which endures. Such is Mahometanism, built as it is upon that curious combination of feeble intellect and fiery imagination which characterises eastern nations. The other more temporary kind of superstition is less a need than a luxury. It fastens itself upon objects in themselves exceptional and transitory. For instance, astrology was formerly made use of to gratify beliefs in themselves agreeable. Or again, we often find men who had become quite materialistic in their opinions about woman, revive all their old superstition about the charm, the privilege, and the refining influence of woman's society, because they have accidentally become acquainted with a girl of exceptional beauty and of still more exceptional brains.

But of all temporary superstitions, and it is the most temporary of all, is that indomitable but confused belief which begins about the twentieth day of December, and certainly expires before the close of the twenty-fifth, that Christmas is a time of unlimited enjoyment, of extravagant generosity on the part of other people, of peculiar immunity from care and of general abundance; and that Christmas Day itself is incessantly jolly from the moment you get up until the moment you go to bed, and therefore quite different from any other day. Looked upon as a nation of shopkeepers, we are exquisitely civilised; looked upon as social beings, we are untutored savages. Buckle says that work is not natural to man. To Englishmen it is pleasure that is not natural. Incidental to our state of social barbarianism is that excess with which we plunge into the opposite extremes of social pleasure. It is culture which teaches nice distinctions.

Very curious but very sad is the strange fact that Englishmen assemble in the largest numbers at churches and pantomimes. But even these two kinds of moral exercise are not quite lucidly understood. At church the Englishman is not devotional, but intellectual,—at the pantomime he is not intellectual, but almost devotional. In England, religion is not as in Italy, in Spain, and even in unbelieving France, beautifully confused with daily life, but it is in fact only alive at certain fixed hours ever Sunday. But the pantomime is witnessed every night for months, by men and women who bring to it the eagerness, the tumult, the rapture of the true martyrs they are. If there is any experience which makes a man sadder without making him wiser, we should say that it is not so much being slowly tortured to death, or having an umbrella thrust into his bowels, and then opened out, as sitting out an entire pantomime.

But our most amusing blunder does not lie merely in the separate treatment, but rather in the clumsy mixture of morality and indigestion. Our Christmas is not a Passover, and it is not a Carnival; it is worship made easy, and feasting rendered painful. On Christmas Day we go to church with a gay feeling of irresponsibility, but we sit down to dinner with a solemn sense of duty. It is this ludicrous confusion that we mean by Mince-Piety.

A NEW PAVEMENT.

THE dogma that hell is paved with good intentions has long been accepted as indisputable. Perhaps, therefore, we ought not now to be surprised to be told, as we were, one morning this week, that "the magistrates of Shrewsbury are directing their energies to putting down bad language in the streets." They are not likely to want material.

WAITERS.

SO much of the happiness in life depends upon being on good terms with waiters, that we shall feel that we have not lived in vain if we succeed in giving some clue to the laws of existence of a race of beings so peculiar, so potent, so little understood. Life is short, but waiters are frequently long. The proudest sciences and the most benevolent arts represent the capitalized contributions of tedious centuries. There must have been a day when the first stone was laid of the very Sphinx itself. It is, therefore, in the humble spirit of men who know, and are content to know, that they are only planting the seed, and may, perhaps, never live to see the tree even peep out of the ground, that we inaugurate a new study, that we reveal a new pasture upon which the human mind may graze, that we present, in a short treatise, the speculations of a baffled, but expensive career.

It is, perhaps, not generally known in Manchester that there are two methods of conducting an investigation—the inductive and the deductive. The inductive method teaches us to collect as many separate observations about waiters as possible, and from them to reason out one typical, individual waiter, with or without pimples. This is the system we intend to pursue, and we leave it to our readers, or to a future generation, whichever our readers prefer, to determine the exact position of waiters in the scale of existence, argued from the particulars we place before them. There is a certain impatience about great facts. A man can't flirt with them; he must lawfully own them right off. Indeed, you cannot imagine Newton discovering gravitation by degrees. It would be like giving a black eye by hitting out gradually. We imagine the human mind to be perpetually playing with the hidden laws of the universe. Jesting with nature, man sometimes speaks a true word, and then, bang! or bing! (as the case may be) he gives his name to a new star, or a new steam-engine, a new religion, or a new sauce. When Newton discovered the law of gravitation, he was sitting in his back garden. When Archimedes found out that when a man gets into a bath the water rises more if he is fat, and more still if he is fatter, Archimedes was himself having a dip. When we made our discovery about waiters, we were sitting in the coffee-room at the Queen's, wondering whether there would be any lemon to the oyster pâtés. These particulars interest some people; but we don't remember what we had on. Nor do we remember whether it was the day before, or the day after, that we had that fit of indigestion. It may have been the day after. What first led us to the conviction that waiters ARE waiters, and not men, was the reflection that, although they are surrounded all day, although they are positively beset with food, yet who ever saw a waiter eat? We will not aver dogmatically that they imbibe through the pores of the skin; we only say that they do not eat. Their mode of drinking, for they do drink, is so different from that of human beings as to be quite as remarkable. When a man, in his instinctive kind of way, wills that he shall drink, he lifts the tankard to his lips, and becomes immediately absorbed in its contents. Not so the waiter. He lifts the vessel to his mouth, darts his eyes wildly and rapidly from right to left, throws his head well back, and jerks the draught swiftly down his throat. It will be remembered that in most coffee-rooms there is a screen, behind which the waiter frequently disappears. Now, just as the ornithologist feels that if he could only pursue the lark or the hen-pecker in all its wanderings and all its places of shelter, he would be in a position more satisfactorily to write its natural history, so we feel that if we could only pursue the waiter behind the screen, we might discover some habit which would reveal an important secret of his existence. It is true that, on three separate occa-

sions, we have caught a glimpse of the other side of the screen, but, unfortunately for that variety of particulars so desirable in the inductive method, precisely the same phenomenon presented itself. We observed the waiter, with his back turned to us; his arm was uplifted, his head was thrown back, and in his hand he held what, to the naked eye, looked almost exactly like a quart pot. But, of course, this is only an hypothesis.

In his calmness and his awful shuffling silence, the waiter ignores the petty codes which govern humanity. For instance, in some restaurants the law is proclaimed, "Waiters are not allowed to take fees under any circumstances." The waiter ignores all human law, but particularly this one. His conversation is brief almost to abruptness. His very manners are epigrammatic. When you enter he bows, twitches his napkin, dances a short minuet towards a chair, pulls it out, and presents you with the bill of fare as if it were a petition, all in one moment. So far he has not uttered a word. Now, only to show how unconsciously we treat waiters in the distinct manner due to a distinct race, we may remind our readers that the first question which it is the invariable custom to address to a man is, "How do you do?" Singularly enough, you never greet a waiter with "How do you do?" but always with "What soups have you got?" The consequence is that he does not reply, "Quite well, thank you, how are you?" like men do, but he delivers himself something in this style: "Soups, sir? Julienne, maccaroni, mock turtle, oxtail, vermicelli." You see there is no feeble digression here, there are no useless figures of speech, there is no ornate departure from the main subject. Every word is as indispensible, as aptly chosen, as searchingly significant as the words in Cæsar's celebrated boast, "I came, I saw, I conquered." On every subject on which you may address him he displays the same nervous power. For instance, if you were to ask him who wrote the best dialogues, Plato or Mr. H. J. Byron, the chances are that he would reply, "Yes sir, coming sir."

Curious it is to meet the waiter in the shade of evening. He goes abroad disguised as a human being in a brown overcoat and a white comforter. But is the disguise quite successful? Does he not always look half waiter and half man? It is very singular that if you do meet him thus, no matter how recently you may have seen him in his natural dress, no matter for how many years he may have waited on you, you are always puzzled, and his face teazes you like a face in a dream. You feel quite uncomfortable, and as he approaches you try to make up your mind as to which of the amenities of life you owe this unknown acquaintance—whether to meet him half way and squeeze his hand, or merely to nod in a familiar way, or only to bow in a distant sort of manner, as if there had been a coolness between your grandfathers. It is only after meeting him a great number of times in a railway carriage where you sit opposite to him, that you remember at once that he is not a man at all, but only a waiter. We often wonder whether, when he gets home, the waiter identifies himself with us and sits down to his meals, or whether he actually *waits upon himself*. Does he, when he is in a particular hurry for anything during dinner, hand it to himself at once, or does he confuse himself with mankind and *keep himself waiting* for ten minutes. Does he, during his own dinner, ever mutter to *himself*, "Salt sir, presently sir." It would be interesting to know if any organisation, any sense of peculiarity prevails amongst waiters, binding them together. If such there be, we are sure that it is not a loud, frothy, impotent society, like the Reform League, but a silent, wiry, obedient society, like the Order of the Trappists. We have had cabman strikes, and tailor strikes, and engine drivers' strikes, but only imagine the panic which a waiter strike would cause! When the cabman strikes we can go on foot, when the tailor strikes we can wear out our old clothes, but if the waiter strikes, good heavens! we cannot starve! Fancy entering an hotel during a waiter strike. Instead of everybody sitting patiently down while this subsidised being stalks about calmly and justly distributing the food in portions, what a savage spectacle we should behold! Each fresh joint as it came up would be received by a compact division with the Roman welcome with which Horatius and his two companions received the Tuscans at the celebrated River Gate. Angry passions would arise, the gravy would be spilt, and the fat and lean would be allotted without any reference to the human liver.

The influence of waiters is of a kind which is felt rather than seen. When the white-haired head waiter bends down and whispers in your ear, you feel that you would like a few friends, who did not think much of you before, to see you now. It is impossible to prevent your dignity from shrinking by the side of the almost diplomatic head waiter. As he looks at you, you feel that he reads the deepest secrets of your nature. He knows whether, in reality, you do not like an honest tough beef-steak better than a *ragoût de tortûe aux truffes nôires*, he knows whether in your heart of hearts you do not prefer bottled stout to Chambertin.

Like all living races, the waiter is subject to the influences of climate and of soil. Therefore, although the waiters of other countries are distinct from the populations of those countries, waiters are also different from each other. The representative English waiter is tall, thin, bald, grey-eyed. He is so absorbed in his work as to appear actually absent minded. Observe him lay the table. He places the knife and fork, and then retires a step and contemplates them from underneath his eyelids. If the position of either does not satisfy his æsthetic instincts, he advances again and nervously shifts them. During dinner you would think that his eyes were on the ground. Yet he is scanning you as closely as a partner at whist, and anticipates your slightest gesticulated want. In the same way he pretends to *hear* nothing, and if you turn round and appeal to him on any question which you have been discussing quite loud, he always replies—"Beg pardon, sir," and you have to repeat it. This is part of his obsequiousness, always to unhear what he has unavoidably heard. The French waiter is not servile, he is only a respectful democrat. He may be said to share the conversation without joining it. He does not disguise that he hears and understands all that is going on, and with a fine tact (*i.e.* that of always being right) he will sometimes put in a useful word. If you are sitting outside the Câfé des Princes, and a brougham passes, and your friend remarks "that is Madlle Mabille," he corrects him, "Non Monsieur, ça c'est Mdlle. Closerie des Lilas." In this way he seems to be always waiting for his chance of saying something—but then he never does say anything unless he can shine. The German kellner combines the democratic tendencies of the French garçon with the unbending reserve of the English waiter. The English waiter will neglect a foreign guest to serve an Englishman, the French waiter will not exert himself to understand a foreigner's wants, but the German waiter is grand and impartial, and nationality does not appeal to him. The English waiter despises you if you do not speak English, the French waiter secretly pities you if you do not speak French, but the German waiter is tolerant, and he even takes a special interest in the opulent Englishman.

We cannot deny that the undivided study which we have devoted to this subject has not shed the most tranquilizing influence upon our life. Men are gifted with a capacity for asking themselves questions which is quite incommensurate with any gift they possess of answering themselves. And just as doubt will break in and trouble us even on subjects of almost habitual belief, so we will confess that we have sometimes had our doubts about our science of waiters. There is something so dreadfully

human about pimples, that we never can see a waiter with pimples without experiencing the kind of shock you can imagine Mr. Babbage would feel if he discovered a hitch in his calculating machine.

THE BLIND ASYLUM CHAPEL.

IT was the custom of Æsop, and his example has been followed by La Fontaine, the Brothers Grimm, and all subsequent writers of the same class, to place at the head of every fable a list of the actors therein. We are almost tempted to proceed on the same principle, only our fable would then have too gigantic a heading altogether. We are dealing with the Court of Chancery, two charitable institutions, a chapel, at least three committees, a whole congregation, a man with a hobby, several clergyman, and a bishop. A pretty little fable they furnish between them!—a fable with a most instructive moral, even as all fables ought to have; nay, with a succession of morals, from the first page to the last. "The last," say we? We would to heaven there were were any last about it! Whether our children's children will see the wished-for end, or any end at all, is quite uncertain, as matters stand and people quarrel. The lion must lie down with the lamb—cat and dog resign, the one its claws, the other its teeth—the Bishop and Dr. Crompton embrace—committees cease to squabble—the congregation know their own minds—the Court of Chancery melt into the diocesan registry—nay, to judge from certain speeches made last week, the High Court of Parliament must descend, like a *deus ex machinâ*, upon the scene,—or the fable, the play, the farce will go on for ever. Fable and farce! No fable more apparently improbable, no farce more absurd! The mischief is, that we cannot laugh and turn away. Ridicule has become stale, and indifference impossible.

"The nearer the church, the further"—in this instance, from peace. Quarrels have sprung up, like mushrooms, in and about those unhappy charities at Old Trafford; quarrels between Bishop and Doctor, Doctor and Board, Board and Master; quarrels involving any amount of private pique, as well as public zeal; quarrels from every and from any cause, until well nigh every Old Trafford hand, or hand which has anything to do with Old Trafford, is against its fellow; but the grand centre and focus of all quarrels has been, and is, the chapel. Unhappy act, the placing of that edifice between the two Institutions—the coupling them together by a place of worship! No doubt, it seemed at first a good and laudable idea that those Institutions should be built, away from dirt and smoke, amidst the open fields; that, being so situated, and at some distance from any church, they should have a church of their own; also that this said church should be large enough to accommodate certain neighbouring householders, who, without incommoding the blind and dumb, might share in the chaplain's ministrations, and help to support the two Institutions, or the chaplain, or all three together, by their pew-rents. All the Manchester world knows that this good and laudable idea was carried out. A large chapel was sandwiched in between Henshaw's Blind Asylum and the Schools for the Deaf and Dumb. In this chapel was a large gallery, well provided with wooden benches, also a ground floor of nicely-cushioned pews below. In the gallery were placed the deaf, and dumb, and blind; in the pews the miscellaneous paying public. Of course, it was but natural that those who paid should have the best places. Well, they had. And the pew-rent was no joke—"nine pounds a-year, and a heavy churchwarden's ley for what they call six sittings, but which *I* call five and a squeeze." This is what our friend Smith growls out, with startling emphasis; but then it is a peculiarity of the Blind Asylum congregation that they all deal in grievances; whereas, had they only possessed a few grains of common sense, they would have banded together to "rest and be thankful." The Blind Asylum Chapel became a place *sui generis*. It groaned under high pew-rents, it is true, but it had no poor, no schools, no charity sermons, no inroads whatever upon the pockets of the congregation, beyond one annual collection. Fancy what a Utopian state of things! Think how serenely the Blind Asylum ark floated along, while other ecclesiastical vessels had to pass through yearly shoals and quicksands—collections for this, and subscription lists for that—schools, foreign missions, Jews, sick and needy—goodness knows what! A nest of doves, an ark of refuge, must Old Trafford have been in those halcyon days; and so it might have continued to the end of the chapter—but—and thereby hangs a tale.

But before we proceed, let us moralize for one moment. There was a seed of evil at the very commencement of the system. It was all very well for the public to occupy and pay for superfluous chapel room; it was all very well for the blind to attend, and join in the service, but how about the deaf and dumb? No doubt any mute, blest with eyesight, and after a certain amount of education, could follow the church-service, and read the lessons, psalms, and prayers, to his comfort and edification, but the sermon must have been a complete blank, unless the preacher afterwards handed round his manuscript for inspection. Altogether, we should have thought that a chaplain to the deaf and dumb would have been able to communicate with the poor creatures in their own way, and should have had a special service and sermon for them in their own language and signs. In fact there seemed a danger that the chaplain would be merged into the congregational clergyman—that the pews below would engross more attention than the gallery benches overhead. The danger became a reality. And, with all due respect, this was the real cause of most of those evils and unseemly disputes which have made the Blind Asylum Chapel a hissing and a reproach throughout the diocese.

How it came to pass, no one seems exactly to know. Even the oldest gossip in Old Trafford, and their number is legion, can only give a confused and incomplete version. The district awoke one day and found itself a parish; the Blind Asylum Chapel was metamorphozed into St. Thomas's Church; the chaplain to the blind and dumb blossomed into a rector, with all rectorial dignity and dues. How this actually came about the Fates and the Bishop can alone say. Two facts, however, stand out clear and distinct; first, that the chaplain himself advanced £1,000 for the necessary endowment, and secondly that the new rectory of St. Thomas's, Old Trafford, was placed in the bishop's gift, and being worth some £500 a year, and involving no work (*except such as the rector chose to do in a certain couple of charitable institutions, the inmates of which were graciously allowed access to the church*), was about the best bit of patronage which his lordship possessed in the immediate neighbourhood of Manchester.

And now comes Dr. Crompton on the scene, and with him a now historical suit in Chancery, for the purpose of undoing the parochial business, and setting the dove-cote in a flutter, as it undoubtedly did. Here, alas! a tragic element is added to the story. It is said that the apprehension of an adverse judgment, and the threats openly expressed that he would be compelled to refund all moneys received from the church since his promotion to a rector, so weighed upon the mind of the Rev. Mr. Buckley, that he fell into a low, melancholy, nervous state, and died. Die he certainly did after a comparatively short illness, and we have little doubt that his end was hastened by the above causes. He appears to have been a peaceable, quiet man, who ruled his congregation on the principle of letting well alone, asking only to be let alone himself. At any rate a semblance of peace reigned over the dove-cote during his life, and none of the congregation knew how large a space he had filled in their hearts until they lost him. We say "a semblance of peace," for there seemed to be no period in the history of the dove-cote when the doves did not peck and twitter at their parson and one

another, more or less. Mr. Buckley dead, the Bishop exercised his patronage, and (if rumour is to be trusted) almost forced the living on the Rector of St. Stephen's, Chorlton-on-Medlock, the Rev. W. Doyle. And now we go back to Æsop's Fables again. The frogs besought Jupiter to send them a king. Jupiter threw them a log. They murmured and asked for another. Jupiter sent them a stork. The stork devoured them at his leisure. They murmured still more. Let us not be misunderstood. We apply the fable simply as regards the frogs. Our application stops short altogether as regards the log and stork. "The fact is, sir," says Smith, "if the angel Gabriel had stript off his wings and got into our church, he would have found no end of folks in the congregation to find fault with him." The pseudo peace of the dove-cote was gone the instant the doves were meddled with. Mr. Doyle,—whether wisely or unwisely we pretend not to say—attempted certain changes. He altered the singing, he introduced monthly collections; the doves made a dreadful commotion, and certain among them took wing to other churches. Pamphlets and state ments were printed and published; accounts were gone into, disputed, and quarrelled over; churchwardens resigned, and other wardens squabbled. In short, there was a row.

Meantime the Chancery suit progressed, and one fine morning St. Thomas's Parish Church sank again into the Blind Asylum Chapel. Bishop might storm, and Churchmen look grave; the State said yea, and yea it was. Then followed a long and inexplicable delay. Committees met, schemes were discussed, trustees appointed. The outside world got heartily sick of the matter, and the Old Traffordites themselves gave up wondering what would follow. At last Mr. Doyle was called upon to formally acquiesce in the Chancellor's decision, and render up his rectorial rights. Like a sensible man he did what was asked of him, and washed his hands of the whole business. It is satisfactory to know that he had the choice of two benefices immediately afterwards. We congratulate him heartily, as much upon his deliverance as his preferment.

For some Sundays after Mr. Doyle's departure, the Chapel appears to have been "served" by various candidates for the Chaplaincy. The chaplain was to have £300 a year, to be under a committee, and to minister to the congregation, without any legal district outside. Still, we may be pardoned for the hint; there seems still to have been little referance to the special requirements of the blind and dumb. The *congregational* idea is still prominent. And again we say it is a mistake. At last a Chaplain was selected, and all was to go as merrily as a marriage bell. But it did not.—And here is the cream of the whole thing:—The Chaplain cannot officiate without the Bishop's licence. Listen to his Lordship! He quietly turns upon his enemies, and smites them hip and thigh. "You would not have a Parish Church? Very well. Then I will only license your clergyman as *Chaplain to the Dumb and Blind.* He shall not read prayers, or administer the Sacraments, to any outsiders whatsoever. His pews must be emptied. The Chapel shall only officiate for the galleries. Go and make the best of it!" This in few words is his Lordship's decision, and if we know anything of the Right Revd. James Prince Lee, it is a decision which will not soon be set aside.

The meeting which followed this decision,—a meeting held only last week—is most amusing, from the crest-fallen tone which involuntarily pervades all the speakers, even the redoubtable Doctor himself. He expresses a mild surprise that the Bishop should interfere with the pleasant arrangements which the Committee had formed. Does he? Dr. Crompton may be innocence itself, but we rather doubt it. However the practical issue of the meeting was a decision that the Chaplain's £300 should not come out of the funds of the Institutions; *i.e.* it must be got by pew rents. If the Bishop holds firm there will be no pew rents whatever; and hence no stipend. We wish the new chaplain joy of his bargain.

One short moral, and we have done. Why, in the name of common sense, is no movement made amongst the inhabitants of Old Trafford, Seymour Grove, and Stretford Road, to build and endow a church altogether independent of Blind Asylums and every other incongruous appendage? The population is rich, and increases every month. Let the Blind Asylum and its sister charity have their Chaplain to themselves, as they ought. If the Bishop will allow some pew-holders to attend, and pay for their pews, well and good; but, whether or not, let Old Trafford be made a distinct parish, and have its own parish church. Till that time, we see nothing but trouble and vexation for both clergyman and flock.

"CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR."

Come is Christmas once again:
Compliments are current, then.
Now, on every side we hear—
"Christmas comes but once a year."

Out-of-doors, the shops' display—
In, the holly-berries, say
Christmas comes but once a year,
And in point of fact is here.

Now's the time, at balls and shows,
When young ladies change their beaus:
Christmas comes but once a year:
Oftener *that* time comes we fear.

Now the churches tune their chimes,
Celebrating sacred times:
Worshippers the day revere:
Christmas comes but once a year.

Now the postmen tribute claim,
Workmen their "allowance" name.
Christmas comes but once a year:
"Once too often?" O, you bear!

Now the little bills fall due,
And alas, the big ones, too.
"Christmas comes but once a year!"
"And quite often enough, my dear."

Now are Jacks saluting Gills;
Youthful stomachs pudding fills.
Children groan, amidst good cheer,
"Christmas comes but once a year."

Now the pantomimes are new:
Enter clown: "How don't you do?"
Christmas comes but once a year
Yet no new jokes e'er appear.

Pocketing enormous tips,
Eke saluting maiden lips—
What a shame it does appear,
Christmas comes but once a year!

Tipping is a losing game;
Misletoe's an empty name:
Christmas comes but once a year—
And's not up to much, when here.

THE USE OF STRONG LANGUAGE.

THE boatswain that Midshipman Easy was acquainted with was impressed with thec onviction that Her Majesty's service could not be carried on without the assistance of strong language. Mr. Cheeks may have been right, but, however necessary expletives may be on the decks of a man of war, one would hardly have expected to find that the Right Hon. W. E. Denison tolerated them in the House of Commons. Such, however, is the fact, if we are to believe the London correspondent of one of our influential daily contemporaries. In evidence the following:—

"If you had entered the House of Commons on Friday afternoon, when swearing was at its height, you would have been in the first place struck by the apparent disorder of the whole scene."

We should think so. Swearing at its height, indeed. Anybody with a proper sense of self respect would have been struck, &c. Where was the Sergeant at Arms, and why on earth did the Right Hon. the Speaker tolerate so gross a breach of decency? Were the honourable members for Birmingham and Manchester among the culprits?

LONDON DRAMATIC CRITICS.

THE untrustworthiness of the dramatic criticism in the London press has frequently been referred to in the columns of the *Sphinx*. A writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* supplies a few facts in support of the same view :—

The way in which a good deal of our dramatic criticism is performed may be called dishonourable, or even dishonest, but not absolutely venal. The dramatic critic, when he does accommodate his opinions to his interests, is too often the slave of a system. And thus the vicious system works. Dramatic criticism has fallen very much into the hands of dramatic authors. A., B., C., and D. share most of that department of literature amongst them. They write for various newspapers, and they all write plays—or steal them honestly and candidly, as a genius must who happens by the accidents of birth to have no invention of his own. Moreover, the theatre is a little world, wherein everybody knows everybody else, and all that is done and said in it. Now, what is A. to do—especially if he should chance to be the father of a family—when B. produces one of his shocking bad pieces at the Royal Octagonal, for instance? A. himself has a play in the hands of the manager of that theatre; B. is a critic also, and has an organ of his own. Now, if A. tells the truth about B.'s play, B., abandoning all scruple, will infallibly tell the truth about A.'s very next production. What is more, the manager of the Octagonal, disgusted at A.'s want of consideration for the interests of the theatre, will send back the manuscript of that misguided curator of taste. What, then, we repeat—what is the unfortunate victim of such an imbroglio to do? He is in it, and must go round with it, or be washed out altogether. B.'s play—(the creation of a lively idiocy, and A. knows it)—must be praised; accordingly he joins with C. and D. in pronouncing it the finest production of its humourous author, and one which gives extraordinary opportunity for the display of Miss Cholmondeley's peculiar legerity. Since a few sentences like this one are so easily written, why should A. make himself disagreeable? Why should he disturb the harmony of a union the end of which is profit and the means good-fellowship? Since everything goes so comfortably—B. puffing A., A. puffing B., their mutual managers propitiated, and a nice little business well secured amongst the confraternity (they have comic "organs" of their own, cheap and nasty, in which to dispose of carpers and interlopers)—why should the friendly conspiracy be blown upon? It is only fair that these considerations should be taken to heart by those who may think that, so far, the free press of this country is not what it should be. The opinion is reasonable; we admit it to the full. Indeed, it is because we have no doubt whatever that the dramatic criticism of the public prints is, as a whole, shamefully corrupt, that we venture to confess a fault which may be amended when it becomes notorious.

LORD STANLEY, M.P., will visit Manchester next month, to preside over an association in which he takes great interest—the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society.

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When bells and cap righte better hadde him suitedde,
Tryed hard to put man's sweetest solace doune—
Among some other notions wylde he mootedde,
As wychcrafte deeminge ague and rheumatick,
And treatinge them untoe ye cure aquatick,
Which failynge—as yt sometymes didde somehowe—
He'd supplemente with faggotte, fire, and towe.
Weak gizzardeddle! 'tis easie toe construe
Why 'gainst my baccy thy aversionne growe;
Toe be in fashionne thou ysmokinge tryed,
Which ynside out yturneddle thy ynside.—
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But puffeddle in peace and growne a wiser Kynge,
To wytchcrafte uppe and—everie other thynge.—
Syth, as it is, thye "Counter-blast" ing witte,
Ye moderne notions will in no wise fytte;
Soe fare ye weel, old regal cookolorum,
Jacobus Primus, Rex Brittaniorum!

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